

The Law is Perfect

There are from time to time, some situations in the Bible that bother me. How can that be? Why would God allow that. In all that, I must remember that the Bible is inerrant, without error and inspired by God.

One of those situations was Jesus and Judas Ischariot. Judas was an unbeliever. Satan at the end of the gospels indwelt, possessed Judas. All through Jesus' ministry, Jesus had to know that Judas was an unbeliever. There was prophecy that a friend would betray Him. So, in my mind, how did Jesus deal with Judas on a day-to-day basis? Was Judas even Jesus' choice? Is it possible that God the Father decided that within the bounds of the Angelic Conflict and the Appeal Trial of Satan, that Satan should have a representative with a front row seat to the ministry of Jesus? Judas could have tempted Jesus on a daily basis. It is documented that Judas was a thief. Jesus knew ahead of time that Judas would betray Him. Based upon the character of God, including the Second Person of the Trinity and including the humanity of Jesus who was without a sin nature and never sinned, then Jesus dealt in grace with Judas. From a human perspective, Judas may have been a "friend" of Jesus during most of the ministry of our Savior.

John 3:18 I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but *it is* that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'HE WHO EATS MY BREAD HAS LIFTED UP HIS HEEL AGAINST ME.' (Psalm 41:9)

Psalm 41:9 Even my close friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.

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Close friend. Literally, “man of my peace.” One commentator suggests “harmonious relationship.”

So this begs the question for us. How do we deal with unbelievers or even believers who have rejected grace and live a legalistic life rejecting eternal security? How are we to deal with them? Should we judge them? Never! We are to deal with them in grace. Even if that person doesn't want to hear the gospel, or may even be able to recite the gospel but flat out reject it, we are to deal with that person in grace. We have a witness of our life.

Take for instance, Ruth. She was not a Jew. She was a citizen of Moab and likely not a believer at the beginning of the book of Ruth. Once her Jewish husband dies, Her mother-in-law, Naomi, decides to return to Israel. Ruth goes with her because at that point she has become a believer. In my opinion, it was the witness of Naomi's life that evangelized Ruth. How we live our lives as Christians can be a very powerful witness to the unbeliever. Of course, those Christians who live their lives outside of the power of the Holy Spirit can be a negative influence on unbelievers.

Now let us get to our lesson in Romans.

Romans chapter 3 contains some important theological words. These words were written to ordinary believers in Rome: The Law, Righteousness of God, Blood of Christ, Redemption, Propitiation, Justification, grace, and one not specifically mentioned: reconciliation. Although there are some cultural and linguistic differences between Rome and the USA today, we should not be afraid of these words. Our educational system seems to have been dumbed down and anti-Bible, anti-Christian. So these concepts are not usually taught in schools. But, these concepts are important for our understanding of what Jesus Christ did for us. If they were important for the ordinary believers of Rome to

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know, according to Paul, then they should be concepts ordinary believers today should be familiar with. Unfortunately, many, perhaps most “Christian” churches today are “nurseries” for baby believers. Young believers leave Bible churches because they want to focus on what the world wants to focus on: emotion and “making a difference.” Yet, the doctrines taught in Bible churches answer questions humanity asks: Who are we? Where did we come from? What happens when we die?

Onward to our lesson...

Romans 3:19 Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God;

The very first word in the Greek is a word that is kind of like a traffic cop, “we know.” Paul is saying that the readers already know, they have a starting point. Here is the starting line for the argument. The Law was for those “under” the Law. Literally, it is not “under” but “in” the Law. But before we progress in this verse, let us spend some time on “we know.”

There are many words for knowing, but this one is important because it carries with it the idea of understanding. Robby Dean delves into the meaning better than I can.

““Now we know...” This is the Greek word OIDA which indicates not coming through a process to knowing something but emphasizes more the arrival, having arrived at this point of knowledge and understanding. Many times this word is used in relation to the knowledge of God because God is omniscient, He doesn’t acquire knowledge. When it is used of humans it indicates knowledge that has already been arrived at,

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and this is emphasized also grammatically because it is in the perfect tense. The significance of the perfect tense grammatically is to emphasize completed action. This could be translated “now we have come to know.” We have come to know his conclusion because he has taken us step by step through a logical chain of argumentation to reach this conclusion.¹”

A version of this verb is the word in English “behold.” It says, “Look at this.” But this word implies understanding. Let us look at John chapter 20 to get a Biblical illustration and application of this verb. There are three verbs used for “seeing” in the particular passage in John chapter 20 that we will look at. One of those verbs is our word.

In John chapter 20, Mary Magdalene has just told Peter and John that Jesus is no longer in the tomb.

John 20:3 So Peter and the other disciple (John) went forth, and they were going to the tomb.

John 20:4 The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead faster than Peter and came to the tomb first;

John 20:5 and stooping and looking in (see #1, blepo), he *saw the linen wrappings lying there; but he did not go in.

John looks in the tomb. This is the Greek verb “blepo.” It means glance. Snapshot. He registered that the tomb was empty, that Jesus was indeed not in the tomb, but at that point he had no understanding of what it meant.

1 <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/romans-menuitem/message/2010-romans-033b/read>

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John 20:6 And so Simon Peter also *came, following him, and entered the tomb; and he *saw (see #2, theoreo) the linen wrappings lying *there*,

John 20:7 and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not lying with the linen wrappings, but rolled up in a place by itself.

Peter now looks. This is the Greek word “theoreo.” This is more in depth than “blepo” but there is no understanding. He sees individual items. He took inventory as it were. John, on the other hand, was looking to see if Jesus was in the tomb or not in the tomb. Yes or no.

John 20:8 So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb then also entered, and he saw (see #3, oida) and believed.

Here is our word. John now looked with understanding. As a result he believed. This is concrete knowledge upon which to base conclusions.

So Paul says that his readers/listeners “know” with understanding because he has belabored the point in chapters 1 and 2. He even went into the Old Testament Scriptures which Jews would be familiar with to prove to them that this point of doctrine was not something new.

So far, the word for “Law” has appeared several times. For a Jew, the Law was important. So let me say a few words about it.

The Mosaic Law does not apply today. But we need to understand the purpose of the Law. Gotquestions.org has a nice summary²:

² <https://www.gotquestions.org/Mosaic-Law.html>

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“The Mosaic Law was given specifically to the nation of Israel (Exodus 19; Leviticus 26:46; Romans 9:4). It was made up of three parts: the Ten Commandments, the ordinances, and the worship system, which included the priesthood, the tabernacle, the offerings, and the festivals (Exodus 20—40; Leviticus 1—7; 23). The purpose of the Mosaic Law was to accomplish the following:

- (1) Reveal the holy character of the eternal God to the nation of Israel (Leviticus 19:2; 20:7–8).
- (2) Set apart the nation of Israel as distinct from all the other nations (Exodus 19:5).
- (3) Reveal the sinfulness of man (cf. Galatians 3:19). Although the Law was good and holy (Romans 7:12), it did not provide salvation for the nation of Israel. “No one will be declared righteous in God’s sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin” (Romans 3:20; cf. Acts 13:38–39).
- (4) Provide forgiveness through the sacrifice/offerings (Leviticus 1—7) for the people who had faith in the Lord in the nation of Israel.
- (5) Provide a way of worship for the community of faith through the yearly feasts (Leviticus 23).
- (6) Provide God’s direction for the physical and spiritual health of the nation (Exodus 21—23; Deuteronomy 6:4–19; Psalm 119:97–104).
- (7) Reveal to humanity that no one can keep the Law but everyone falls short of God’s standard of holiness. That realization causes us to rely on God’s mercy and grace. When Christ came, He fulfilled the Law and with His death paid the penalty for our breaking it (Galatians 3:24; Romans 10:4). By faith in Him, the believer has the very righteousness of Christ imputed to him.”

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1. For Gentiles the Law is a moot subject. It applied only to the sons of Israel and converts.
2. The Law applied in the dispensation of the Law. This is the dispensation of the Church. The rules are different.
3. As a result, today, believers are Christians. The rules are different.
4. There was nothing wrong with the Law. The issue at hand was the purpose of the Law. Salvation was not achieved by keeping the Law.

The Law is Perfect:

Psalm 19:7 The law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

Perfect. The Hebrew word means complete and without defect. It is used as a requirement for the sacrificed animals used in the Levitical offerings.

Psalm 19:8 The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Psalm 19:9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true; they are righteous altogether.

Psalm 19:10 They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb.

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The Law is Good: 1 Timothy 1:8;

1 Timothy 1:8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully,

1 Timothy 1:9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers

1 Timothy 1:10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,

1 Timothy 1:11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

The problem with the Law has nothing to do with the Law itself. The problem is people. When God said don't do it, people automatically do it. There is an illustration from the movie "I Robot" that may be helpful for some. The movie is based upon stories by Isaac Asimov. It was made into a movie, "I Robot." The basis of much of the action is based upon the "Three Laws of Robotics."

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“The Three Laws of Robotics:

1. “A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm;”
2. “A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings except where such orders would conflict with the First Law;”
3. “A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Law;”³”

In the dialogue, the following exchange takes place⁴.

Detective Del Spooner: Is there a problem with the Three Laws?

Dr. Alfred Lanning: The Three Laws are perfect.

Detective Del Spooner: Then why would you build a robot that could function without them?

Dr. Alfred Lanning: The Three Laws will lead to only one logical outcome.

Detective Del Spooner: What? What outcome?

Dr. Alfred Lanning: Revolution.

Detective Del Spooner: Whose revolution?

Dr. Alfred Lanning: *That*, Detective, is the right question. Program terminated.

That is the problem with the Mosaic Law. It is perfect. But people will revolt against it. Revolution against God.

Please keep in mind, though, that there are many principles in the Law that still apply today. For instance, principles contained in the Ten Commandments apply today. They are either specifically stated in the New Testament or are assumed in some of the narratives and instructions. No, we do not rest on the Sabbath. The principle that carries over is embedded in “do not forsake the gathering of yourselves.” We gather, either in person or via the internet to worship and to learn.

3 <https://www.goodreads.com/work/quotes/1796026-i-robot>

4 <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0343818/quotes/>

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Here is another quote from GotQuestions.org:

“Here are the Ten Commandments and where they are found in the New Testament:

- 1) Do not worship any other gods (1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5)
- 2) Do not make idols (1 John 5:21)
- 3) Do not misuse the name of the Lord (1 Timothy 6:1)
- 4) Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. (There are many references to the Sabbath day in the New Testament, including the assumption that Jews under the law in the time of Christ would be observing the Sabbath. But there is no direct or indirect command for believers in the church age to observe the Sabbath as a day of rest or of worship. In fact, Colossians 2:16 releases the believer from the Sabbath rule. Jesus, the Lord of the Sabbath, has become for us our Sabbath rest, according to Hebrews 4:1–11.)
- 5) Honor your father and your mother (Ephesians 6:1–2)
- 6) Do not murder (Romans 13:9; 1 Peter 4:15)
- 7) Do not commit adultery (1 Corinthians 6:9–10)
- 8) Do not steal (Ephesians 4:28)
- 9) Do not give false testimony (Revelation 21:8)
- 10) Do not covet (Colossians 3:5)⁵”

⁵ <https://www.gotquestions.org/Ten-Commandments-New-Testament.html>

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Accountable. From Douglas Moo:

“The purpose for which the words of Scripture address the Jews is “that every mouth might be stopped and the whole world be held accountable to God.” The terminology of this clause reflects the imagery of the courtroom. “Shutting the mouth” connotes the situation of the defendant who has no more to say in response to the charges brought against him or her. The Greek word translated “accountable” occurs nowhere else in the Scriptures, but it is used in extra-biblical Greek to mean “answerable to” or “liable to prosecution,” “account-able.” Paul pictures God both as the one offended and as the judge who weighs the evidence and pronounces the verdict. The image, then, is of all humanity standing before God, accountable to him for willful and inexcusable violations of his will, awaiting the sentence of condemnation that their actions deserve.⁶”

Romans 3:19 (Wuest) But we know absolutely that whatever things the law says, it says to those within the sphere of the law, in order that every mouth may be closed up and the whole world may become liable to pay penalty to God.

⁶ Moo, D.J. (1996). The Epistle to the Romans. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. Page 205